

Interview with Antonio Orendain

Radio Station KMUL
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1:15 PM

Key

BG = Bill Valdez González, KMUL Staff Announcer

NA = Elías Noé Anzaldúa, KMUL Staff Announcer

AO = Antonio Orendain, Organizer, United Farm Workers of America (UFW)

AA = Armando Acosta, Board Member of Chicanos Unidos-Campesinos, Inc.

NOTE: This interview was conducted in Spanish. The following is a functionally equivalent translation, with certain idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms rendered using approximate analogs in English. Except where relevant to the context, false starts, corrections and pauses have been edited out.

BG: We have with us Elías Noé Anzaldúa and Mr. Antonio Orendain, right? And some representatives of Chicanos Unidos-Campesinos, local and statewide. Here now, Elías Noé Anzaldúa and our guests.

NA: Very well. Thank you, Bill. It's 1:15 in the afternoon. We'll be with you until 4:00; at 4:00 we'll be leaving for the Houston, Texas, area. Tomorrow, María Esquivel will be handling the programming on 1380, Monday and Tuesday.

As promised yesterday by Armando Acosta, Antonio Orendain is in Muleshoe, Texas, today, and we wanted to give him the opportunity to greet the public in the West Texas area. He's accompanied by some colleagues— are you all from the Valley? They're all from the Valley. We're going to give each one an opportunity to say hello to our listening public. The microphones of Radio 1380, now, to Mr. Antonio Orendain.

AO: Thank you very much for inviting us to be here, especially to Mr. Armando Acosta, as well as to Chicanos Unidos, as we come for the first time— or for me it's the first time I've come to West Texas. We're noticing lots of farm workers who sympathize with the Union— not "the union in the Valley," but rather the union that César Chávez directs from California. For example, yours truly has worked with or assisted César Chávez for a long time, trying to build a union for the farm workers, first in California. Down in the Valley, we've been trying to inform the farm workers that, before going to California, they think about where they're going and what it is they're going to do. Because many times, they have been using these workers— or more times than not they're using them to break a strike. If the workers have a certain standard of living and they pay less here in Texas, yes, they can earn a little more by going to California, but they don't realize what they're going to do; they're going to break a strike or a movement that in the long run will end up benefiting everyone.

Now what we also want to clarify is that César Chávez is not saying that farm workers must earn two or three dollars an hour. No. The only thing we're asking is for recognition of the worker's right to put

a price on the sweat of his work, just as, for example, gas stations put a price on their gasoline or bakeries put a price on their bread. Because right now, the growers are saying, "No, if the Union comes in, it's going to demand that I pay two, three dollars an hour, and I'm not going to be able to pay that much; I'd be better off not planting my crop." This isn't true. We're not asking— César Chávez has never demanded that a worker be paid three or four dollars an hour. The only thing he's asking is that the growers recognize the worker's right to sit down and negotiate a union contract, or hours of work, as well as the price of the work, in the same way any other person negotiates and puts a price on the labor he sells.

NA: Mr. Orendain, can you tell us— in the "Magic Valley" of the Rio Grande, have you had any success in forming a union, or how many unions have you achieved in the Valley or in other places where you've worked?

AO: We always have to refer back to the movement in California, where we succeeded in getting contracts covering almost 85 percent of the grapes and 75 percent of the lettuce for three years. After three years, we lost them because another union came in and took away those contracts, without giving the workers the chance to vote on whether they wanted that union or not. In the Valley, we started to have something similar; something similar started in 1966. I don't know how many people remember that situation over there in the Valley, but thanks to the Texas Rangers and their own brutality, they destroyed our entire effort and beat some of our people. We then sued the Texas Rangers— the first time in U.S. history that anyone had sued a police force as powerful as the Texas Rangers. We took them to federal court in 1968. After three years of deliberation, three federal judges found them guilty; after thinking about it for three years *[he laughs]*, they were guilty, and they were found guilty of police brutality and abuse, and of working on the side of the growers to break our union.

Now what good did it do that after three or four years they ruled that they had abused their authority? Still to this day, the state of Texas is appealing this to the Supreme Court in Washington. So when the justice system comes in supposedly to help the low-income worker— the worker who has no money— inasmuch as Lady Justice is blind, she doesn't see the worker. For the rich, on the other hand, Justice is also blind, but she has very good ears, and when she hears the sound of the dollar, she moves very quickly in favor of the employer and very slowly in favor of the worker, because he has no money.

So in the Valley, we have nothing; right now, there are absolutely no union contracts. But there are many people who sympathize with the Union, and we have picket lines, demonstrations and marches against the grocery store chains like HEB, for example. Some of the other stores have taken us to court, have sued us. One store in Harlingen sued us for two-and-a-quarter-million dollars. We're going to have to sell a lot of tamales to be able to pay that.

NA: That's for sure! *[he laughs]*

AO: Another store in Mission, Texas, sued us for a quarter-million. So now we owe— we've been sued for two-and-a-half-million dollars. Now we've discovered that that store was doing something wrong, so we've sued them back for half-a-million dollars. In other words, we're fighting fire with fire.

NA: Okay. You mentioned that in California other organizations, or another union, broke the contract. Were these other unions or organizations Mexican-American groups? Or what percentage were Mexican-Americans?

AO: We can say that the farm worker population is made up of— the majority, for example— 60 to 70 percent Mexican-Americans. Now the reason that other union got in like that is that, before we can represent you— If you have 100 workers, I don't come to you and say, "You know what? I'm going to represent your 100 workers." No. First I talk to your 100 workers, and if your 100 workers want me

to represent them, then I come to you and I say, "Look, sir, the 100 workers that you have want me to represent them, and they want us to negotiate better working conditions and better wages." And if you don't accept that, that's when we have to consider a strike or some other action. But if you actually say, "Okay, can you prove it to me?" I prove it with authorization cards, as they're called, where each worker signs the authorization card and puts down his Social Security number— of course, I'm not going to show you the signatures, but in front of an impartial judge who says, "Yes, these 100 workers are signed up with the Union," then that's when we negotiate a contract. This is the way César Chávez has done it.

It was in this way, then, that we represented all the workers in California for three years. But after three years, the growers— instead of signing with us again, this other union comes to you directly and says, "Look, if you sign with us, then your lettuce will have our union label on it, or your grapes will have our union label on them, so you'll be able to sell your products in the marketplace, or they'll be sold in the store, and now there won't be any more boycott. Sign with us, deduct their dues, deduct a certain amount of dues from the workers' pay, and that's all you have to do." In other words, they say they represent the workers without ever having asked if you agreed to be represented or not.

NA: In other words, the workers didn't agree, weren't aware of the negotiations that were going on that affected them.

AO: You just said it— the worker never knew, for example, if at first they were making deductions from your paycheck to pay dues to César Chávez' union, then from one day to the next they said, "Your money is no longer going to César Chávez' union; now your money is going to pay the dues of this other union."

NA: So automatically they switched unions on the worker, and changed it by force, you could say.

AO: They changed them completely, and it's for that reason that we're conducting this boycott nationally, asking people not to buy grapes and lettuce that comes from California if it wasn't picked under a United Farm Workers contract. Perhaps it would be good to clarify, for example, that many people say, "Okay, but what difference does it make if the lettuce is already here? You should stop them from picking it." The reason the grapes and lettuce are still being picked in California lies in the way they abuse the worker. For example, when 100 workers go out on strike, they bring in 200 more— perhaps from farther away or from Mexico— who are more in need, and because they're needy they'll ...

NA: They'll work for a lower wage.

AO: ... work more cheaply. So the grower can get his product out by means of undocumented workers, or by using what we could call slave labor, and get the lettuce to market, but if neither the lettuce nor the grapes will sell in the marketplace, he's going to lose money on the wages paid to the workers— even if it isn't much— and he's going to lose money in transporting the products, and when they still won't sell, that's when he has to sit back down to negotiate.

NA: Orendain, in the Valley there are so many people, so many Mexican-Americans— something like 65, 70 percent now— I think up to 80 percent, right?

AO: Eighty-two percent.

NA: Eighty-two percent. With so many Mexican-Americans, why in all this time that you've made such an effort, why haven't you been able to convince the people of this? Where's the lapse, or what's happening here?

AO: The failure, I believe, is the same issue, that a lot of the people who live in the Valley think or say, "Okay, my house is here and this is my homeland, but I'm going to go work in West Texas or up north; I'm not working here in the Valley." So right now thousands of workers there in the Valley, or thousands of Valley residents, are thinking about where they're going to go, west or north, because it's getting very hot there now for the upcoming melon season. So when the season starts, they come north and the people who live in Reynosa or across the border are the ones who come in to work. In other words, if you live in the Valley you say, "I don't work cheap, because there are lots of starving people from the other side of the border coming in to work cheap." But when they come up north here, the people from here say, "Those people from the Valley come to work cheap, those starving people from the Valley." If you go from here to California to work, they say, "Those people from Muleshoe, those starving people from Muleshoe are going to work cheaper." In other words, because as a worker I'm afraid to fight like a man, I go around crying like a woman over what I couldn't defend like a man— which is to say, putting the blame on someone else instead of seeing what the problem is and how we're going to resolve it.

NA: Okay. The organization Chicanos Unidos-Campesinos is now everywhere, Orendain, all over the region. How long, more or less, do you think it will take to organize the people well, to be able to explain your case so they understand?

AO: Look, to give you exact numbers and figures is like telling you when everyone is going to be Catholic or Christian. Look how many thousands of years they've been preaching the Christian religion, and are still preaching and organizing to make people religious and keep them in the Christian religion. And I'm not talking about any one religion, because look how many promoters there are, how many Methodists, Baptists, and all these revivals that you see everywhere. That that still goes on means, so many thousands and thousands of years that religion has been preached, yet still not everyone is Catholic. Because if everyone were Catholic, or if everyone were religious, there wouldn't be a need for all these campaigns that are going on now. But if those campaigns have gone on for thousands of years— or 1974 years, to be more precise— that means if the Union has just started, you can just imagine! *[he laughs]*

NA: Correct. You're right. Anyway, Orendain, in the last few years— well, I'm speaking of the local situation here in town, what Armando, Daniel and the rest have done here— in the last two years they've advanced a lot. Is that happening everywhere, or just in certain areas?

AO: Exactly. You're saying "have advanced"— you've seen, four years ago for example, the working conditions that existed then and the conditions that exist at present. Perhaps they haven't improved much, or perhaps the housing and other conditions are the same; wages are five or ten cents higher. But simply the change in the worker's attitude— before, for instance, maybe we'd see an Anglo, we'd remove our hat and step down off the sidewalk. In that type of attitude, I think we're getting on the same level, because under a union contract there's a mutual respect, right? Because when there's no union contract, I'm always thinking that you— when we say, "Our father, give us this day our daily bread," an angel isn't going to come down and give us bread, but we think our employer is the angel that's going to give us a check to live on. Under a union contract, I no longer look up to you as if you're the angel that's supporting me; instead, I see you as a man, a person who needs me to live just as I need you to live. And we see one another eye to eye, on the same level, without having to wait around for Christmas so that you can give me a bottle or a cigar, and have me going around saying, "What a great boss I have; he gave me cigarettes or a good cigar, or he gave me a bottle," while all year long you have me living under these conditions. That kind of equality that we're achieving is an indication of whether or not what Chicanos Unidos is doing, or what we're doing in the Valley, is working.

NA: Changing the subject, how have you all viewed the gasoline crisis over there in the Valley?

AO: That's another problem that's emerging in the Valley, that many of the federal programs— we say, for example, that a federal program is like a piñata. Have you noticed how with a piñata, if there are 50 kids, not all of them get something from it, right? Likewise, in a federal program not everyone gets something out of it. But at the same time, if you can't get in, they intimidate you by making you wait until someone in the program dies before you get your turn. In effect, they're taking away your initiative to fight for yourself, to demand better pay. Because the day they don't pay you enough, the day they force you into making less than enough, you're going to have to fight for it; but as long as there's a federal program— as long as there's one of these little piñatas— you're going to be looking for where to get more benefits and where to continue getting them.

Regarding the gas crisis, whether it's real or not, what's happening is that over there it's much worse than here. Because I notice that here, for instance, maybe you can buy gas right now, or in the afternoons. Over there in the Valley now, they're giving each gas station from 500 to 800 gallons a day, and they're sold out in three or four hours. So from noon on down you're going around looking to see where they're going to sell you gas, and at the majority of stations they'll only sell you up to three dollars worth. I'm seeing that up north here, there's no such three-dollar limit.

NA: Here there's no problem. Here, if you bring some sort of "huge container," as they say, you can fill it with 500 gallons; take it away. But yes, on the news we've seen what's happened in San Antonio— or from San Antonio south, almost all that exists. Not long ago, too, we saw a major problem with this in Harlingen.

Now Orendain, when school's out in May, that's when, as you say, everyone will be leaving to work, whether in Muleshoe or in California or Arizona. What are these people going to do about this crisis? Do you have any contact with offices that can provide information to them? "Look, don't go there because you're going to have to stop, to support yourself or do this or that." Don't you have any program in place for the work season now?

AO: Our intention is not, for example, to serve as a guardian angel for every farm worker. Because if it's true that God gives each of us a guardian angel to watch over us our whole life, at times even our own guardian angel falls asleep on us and we walk into a post, right? It would be impossible for the Union to be this kind of guardian angel for every worker. What we want is to teach the worker to take care of himself and to respect himself. Right now, Rep. Kika de la Garza is going around over there supposedly wanting to give out some little cards identifying you as a migrant farm worker, so that they'll sell you gas wherever you go. Do you really believe, if there are 10 or 15 cars ahead of you and you show them your card signed by Kika de la Garza, they're going to attend to you before the 10 or 15 people ahead of you in line? That's nothing but politics on the part of that politician— or if I got involved just so my organization could say, "Look, Antonio Orendain; what a good man! He has so many sheep in his flock, or so many people in his care." It's not our interest to try to be guides when we don't know how to guide ourselves, perhaps. Our interest is in teaching people not to believe in a federal program, as I said earlier, or that we should depend on our godfather or guardian angel to take care of us, if we don't know how to take care of ourselves.

As I say, the day that you have the right to put a price on your work, or that you and I are working under a union contract, it doesn't matter that you live in hell and I live in heaven; if we do the same type of work, we should be paid the same amount of money. And this isn't the case right now, because if you don't speak good English, or if you're a *mexicano*, they probably pay you less. And I'm an Anglo, I'm white, so they pay me more. Those kinds of discrimination are eliminated automatically under a union contract, and that's our main interest— that each person be his own guardian angel and not go around depending on a politician or some other person.

NA: We've seen a lot of progress. Around here we have one of the largest meat-packing facilities— Bill works for one of them, Wilson; he's now with Missouri Beef Packers— and in past years, Orendain,

you probably recall that for a woman to come in and work on the line in a processing unit with men just wasn't seen. We have an advertisement right here, that they're hiring or soliciting hands for Missouri Beef Packers, *men and women*.

AO: They're doing it, in my opinion, as a guise, because in any event with just one or two women— it's like we say, we were so happy three or four years ago, a lot of *mexicanos* were thrilled because Nixon had opened the doors to us. Just imagine: he had appointed a woman, Ramona [sic] Bañuelos, as U.S. Treasurer. What were we going to gain, or what did we gain, by having her name— who ended up better off by seeing the name "Ramona [sic] Bañuelos" on all our dollar bills? Did it help you in some way? Did it help me in some way that her name came out like that? Was I supposed to feel proud? Or every time I saw her name on a bill, was it going to relieve my hunger? That's the thing that we need to clarify, that we shouldn't let ourselves be deceived— that merely by displaying the name of a *mexicano*, now we're going to think we've made it to the top, when we're still just as hungry and needy as we were, or worse off than we were before. By the way, Ramona [sic] is gone now, better to sell tacos— I think she does more business selling tacos than signing those little papers.

Those are the kinds of issues that we should not let ourselves be fooled by. What do we gain if they let a woman work in that packinghouse? Or, for example, this other story you hear, that I should enroll my kids in daycare so that I can take my wife to work in the fields. That, too, is another way of deceiving us, because the day I see a lawyer or a doctor take his kids there, that's where I'm taking mine, because it's a good program. When have you seen a daycare enroll the children of a doctor, a lawyer or a policeman? There aren't any, simply because the doctor, the lawyer, the policeman, the professional earns enough money like a man and can support his wife. I'm a man, too, but I don't earn enough money and have to take my wife to work to help me support the family.

NA: Very well. Do we still have the minister speaking at 2:00? Is that right, at 2:00 p.m.? Orendain, is there any other question that we haven't asked you that you'd like to clarify, or that you'd like to bring to our attention here in this area?

AO: Well, the only thing I'd like to clarify or inform everyone of is that, both in California and in the Valley, we have a newspaper called *El Campesino* that comes out every 15 days. It's where we air our views; we look at each problem from a different perspective. It's like I said, for example, the problem can be between the two of us, and I see it from one angle and you see it from another. But because you're educated, you're going to be right. That's what I want to say, that you can't be right all the time; give me an opportunity to say, "Look, I want to do this too," or "I, too, want to have a role in resolving this problem." In other words, if we're both going to make *atole*, I want to stir it, too, and not just wait for you to serve it to me and say "Look, this is good for you." That's what we see in the federal programs, or what we're seeing at present— that you get educated, make it to the top and say, "I got an education; I did it the hard way; now you have to follow me." And the only thing we become, those of us who are stuck below, we become like little sheep that they take from one corral to pen us up in another one a little bit bigger.

So that's our point of view, what we want to say to the people. As children of God or as humans, we are able to think, and three heads think better than one. Why, then, do we have to respect and blindly obey a person who says he's the leader, when all together we can come up with better ideas? Over there in the Valley, that's what we're doing— trying, for example, to explain the difference between UFW lettuce and non-UFW lettuce, why we're doing it, and also to clarify to everyone that, as I say, the Union is not demanding that the grower pay two or three dollars an hour— rather only that the grower realize that he needs us and we need him. It's a matter of both coexisting, but with better understanding and not, "I'm the boss. If you want to work on the terms I say, fine. If not, go to hell. Pretty soon someone else will come along who's hungrier than you, who for sure'll submit to all my whims."

That's the only issue that exists right now, and not to go around laying blame. For example, because I live up here in the north we put the blame on "those cheap workers from the Valley." Those of us in the Valley say, "Those starving people from Mexico." Those of us from Mexico say, "That bunch of Chicanos; they don't like to work; they like to live on food stamps; they like to live off the federal programs. My boss says I'm a very good worker, so he pays me three, four dollars an hour; with the four dollars he gives me, I send two to Mexico; I'm doing business." In other words, as a worker I'm shifting the blame to another worker, and he to another, but we're not trying to determine, is it the fault of those from Mexico? Is it the fault of the ones from the Valley? Is it the fault of those up north here? How are we going to help the ones at fault? How are we first going to get together to determine how many we are, who we are, what our problems are? Is it really a lack of education? *[12 seconds missing from tape]* . . . to someone else who didn't go to school. Perhaps a doctor— I can tell you about thousands of lawyers who've cheated people that didn't go to school, but I've never known of a lawyer who's cheated another lawyer, because two awls can't stick one another.

This means, then, that they're using education to continue swindling those of us who didn't have that opportunity, or those of us who are just dense, pig-headed people who didn't understand or learn anything. But in any case, what would happen if everyone went to school, if everyone got a diploma in law or in medicine? I'd ask you, "Listen, do you want to work the land?" You'd say, "No, I'm a lawyer; I don't work the land." I'd go to someone else, "Don't you want to work?" "No, I'm a doctor; I don't want to work the land." Supposing no one worked the land. The land isn't going to produce by itself. What we're seeking is— just as the others say, "I'm a professional, a lawyer, I'm a business professional, I'm a professional banker"— that the farm worker be able to say, "My profession is working in the fields, and from there God gave me my living, not a living with riches but at least the basic necessities that the rest of society is used to." That's what we're asking for, and that those with an education not go on telling us that because we didn't get educated, we have to send our children [to daycare], and meanwhile we should be slaves and work at whatever wage they want to pay us, and "since he has no education, I'm going to free myself and be a cheat to another who didn't go to school."

NA: Orendain, you're right. There are many points of view, as I say, that we're not dealing with within the radio station. We don't know the situation on the farms. Bill has his own work, Armando has his work in the fields— but sitting down and discussing things, you become a little bit more aware. From my point of view, in the last two or three years I've learned some things that I didn't know before, see? Sitting down, discussing, talking with one another, you understand a little more. And as Bill was saying yesterday, these local guys here have done a lot for the community, and not only here; now they've moved into Bovina and to other places throughout the region. And I think in the Morton area here, this activity isn't happening because they haven't moved in. In other parts, it hasn't taken hold like it has here in the Muleshoe area, and I think yes, things have improved— such as Tienda Obrera that they're opening now, these emergency food vouchers that they have, emergency medical vouchers and all that. Before and in other places, they don't have that. In other areas like up in Pampa, in Borger, in those places they say, "No, we don't know nothing about that; we don't know anything about that here."

AO: See, those are the reasons we say, what good would it do if there were a law requiring that kind of services throughout Texas? But in those places you mentioned where none of that exists, it's because there's no Chicanos Unidos like there is here. That means that Chicanos Unidos can't be, as I said before, the guardian angel of the whole world, nor can César Chávez be the guardian angel of the whole world. So we all need to edu— we all need to *wake up*, not get educated. We need to learn to demand and not wait for you to come and help me, or wait patiently for the year Jesus Christ appears and comes back to save us. Because I'm sure that the year Jesus Christ comes back, they'll turn around and crucify him again in a half-hour, and things will go on the same.

Over there in the Valley, for example, there was a Baptist minister who was attacking us a lot, and he often says that we're all equal under the cross. And he's right, we're all equal under the cross, but

there are some ministers who climb up on the cross and make it heavier for us to carry. The way they want it done, if it really is "To Caesar what is Caesar's" and "To God what is God's," but when a minister presumes to tell us that we should be good in order to save our soul, but at the same time he tells us to be humble under the laws of man— because we're going to get our reward later, up in heaven— they don't have any more regard for us than that we live lean and starve from hunger here, and when we die someone's going to pin a pair of wings on our ribs.

Those are issues we should clear up, that it's better to die with something in your stomach too, but that it be obtained by the sweat of your brow— as the Bible itself says, "earn our bread by the sweat of our brow"— and not earn our bread by the sweat of another, which is how the growers do it.

NA: Okay. Bill, do you have a question for Mr. Orendain?

BG: No, I just wanted to congratulate Mr. Orendain. Unfortunately, Mr. Orendain, we're just radio announcers here, and we have to abstain from commentary like you just finished giving— that the people understand, shall we say, what's happening between the worker and the grower. Unfortunately, I have the same ideas— or *fortunately*, I have the same ideas as yours, since I, too, am a representative of a union— of meat cutters and packers— over there in the city of Hereford, Texas. But as I mentioned before, I have to abstain from making comments of this kind since it's not in my interest because— I can't make a comment of this kind mainly because my work doesn't allow it. But if and when I can be of some moral support to your project, to the work you're doing, I'm at your service, as long as it doesn't involve violence, because when the punches start, Bill González runs!

Mr. Orendain, it's been a pleasure for us to have you here, and I repeat again: You have said some things that for quite a while we needed to hear in this area, but which for reasons related to my work I've had to refrain from saying. But you've said them for me, and for that I express to you my most sincere congratulations. The microphones once again back to you.

NA: Very fine, Bill. Thanks. We're on the same point. Working in radio, Mr. Orendain, you know that we have our rules, our methods. I've been here going on 15 years now, with the support of the public, and we've all made it a good program. We started with a little 30-minute program; we now have an eight-hour program on Sundays. We have a daily program starting at 4:00 every day, which is about the only radio station in Spanish— apart from the station in Lubbock, Texas, which is full-time in Spanish. Beyond that, in this entire region our station here has provided more public service of all kinds, no matter what it might be, everything. They ask us for information, they ask for time, we give it to them. And for that reason, the program has grown. As Bill just said, many times— I work with my boss, we have many merchants that we have to live with every day. They may agree with the organization, they may not. We have to get along with them. We can't be for them, we can't be against them. We have to stay on a regular footing. But we've always given the microphones to the people who've come to us— to you most recently, Armando, Daniel, Brian; those who have wanted to use our radio station, they've done it, without any cost.

AO: That may be one of the main things, as you say, that we've been doing that we can prove. For instance, the way that you're expressing it, the way you're helping us, you don't have to say, "We're with them 100 percent," but just opening the door as you're doing now. Ten or fifteen years ago, for example, when you started, could you have done what you're doing now? So that means that we've made some progress, or times are changing; at least we're doing something, as I say.

Thanks to the very democracy we have in this country, we can shout— though perhaps we don't remedy anything by shouting— but yes, we can shout about our needs, and maybe in other countries they don't even let us do that. So we always have that advantage, right? And that's why we're— well, we can say *grateful*, not for any one person, but for the system we live under, which isn't 100 percent correct, perhaps not perfect— there's nothing perfect in this world— but yes, it's a little better than

other systems of government. So that's why we can progress and we can shout, and each year things get better because each year we're opening more doors to better reach our people.

I'm going to be in the office of Chicanos Unidos here in Muleshoe starting at 3:00 this afternoon, to continue talking with whoever would like to join us there. So we invite the entire listening audience who may have heard us and would like to visit with yours truly, Antonio Orendain, and the others who accompanied me from San Juan, Texas, to meet us, as I said before, meet us, and see who we are, how many we are, and what we can do— "size up our forces before trying to move mountains." So we're going to be there at 3:00 p.m. and we're going to talk. And once again I want to thank you, because the truth is there aren't many stations like this one. There aren't many stations like this one.

NA: There are very few.

AO: So perhaps ten years from now you'll be able to say, "We were one of the first stations that started to open the conversation, or express the point of view of these goofy farm workers." *[laughter]*

NA: In other words, Orendain, as you saw when you arrived, the boss was drinking coffee in the other room, and he went out. Don't think that— I don't know if you saw him or not, but he's a good person, a fine man. It's just that I don't believe he had met you; he went outside. But what I want to say is, I don't have to tell the boss, "Listen, Gil, Orendain is going to come here. Will you give him a chance to speak or not? How does it look to you? I don't want to have problems with you." Orendain got here boom, boom. He got here . . .

AO: In the Valley, we have a 15-minute radio program that we have to pay \$23 for. We have to submit the program taped . . .

NA: Let's see, Bill, figure it out; how many minutes does Orendain owe us for now? *[he laughs]*

AO: We have to submit the program three days in advance, presumably so they can censor it. In the last three years, they've held up two of our programs. We've filed a complaint against them in Washington and everything. But that's the kind of experience we've had. At times they say, "I'm going to translate this, and if it's very controversial, you can't say it." Until you scare them with lawyers, until you threaten to take them to court, that's when they say, "Okay, then, let's talk about it again." Pretty soon they say, "Okay, well, we'll let it air after all." Those are the things that we're putting up with, and as I say, ten years from now you'll be proud to say, "We started it, and we're going to keep doing it," because ten years from now there'll be more freedom than exists today.

NA: Orendain, there are times when we get criticism, and naturally, working in this medium here at the radio station, we have a certain percentage of the people who agree with us and another percentage— you're going to have enemies. It's the same way in your work. There are people who are going to attack you in any event. The same with us, too, only now I've given up. I've given up. I have to do my job as it is, and we're not going to— as the saying goes, I'm not a little genie that's here to please everybody; we can't; it's impossible. There are people who say, "Well, Bill's more handsome, thinner; you're uglier, we don't want you there; blah, blah." "Bill should go; he's no good; he yells too much; why do you have him there?" And then, "No, we don't want Noé; we want Bill." But it's like I say, if we're going to be that way, then we're never going to— There are people who call me— I have a son who went into the service, and they say, "Why don't you put Roy there instead and get Bill out of there?" With that kind of approach, we can't give them— we can't please the entire public. So if I want to stay here, I have to be firm, sit down and put up with the knocks that come from all sides. When we have to say something to the public, we say it.

Yesterday or the day before, Orendain, we were talking— Bill can tell you about it, or those who heard. Our boss here is one person who gives you more free air time, whatever you want. We don't

know who it was, but they stole a rug that we had just bought from the Chamber of Commerce. It says "Welcome to Muleshoe," with a very beautiful muleshoe on it. It cost us \$35. We didn't have it here two days when it was stolen from us. We don't know who it was— *mexicano*, black, colored, white— well, we don't know who it was, but whoever the person was did a very foul thing. Because this radio station, Orendain, anyone can tell you: when something happens, we here have paid— well, we haven't paid *ourselves*, but with the cooperation of the public— when so-and-so dies in an accident and there's no money for the bills, we call the funeral home, we find out about it, and we give it a go. We won't mention names or amounts, but we've paid for many, many funerals. Hospital bills, we can't because it's impossible; sometimes even for a half-hour they want to charge you a world of money. But the people help us, and we help the people. And then I get to thinking, "But who would do this, carry off a rug? What for, pray tell?" So don't be barbarians; bring back the rug!

Do any of the gentlemen with you have any other point they'd like to make, or would they like to use the microphones to speak to the public? Perhaps they have relatives in the area. Where are you from, gentlemen?

RD: I'm from McAllen.

NA: What part of McAllen? From what section of McAllen, on 17th Street or where?

RD: South 23rd Street.

NA: South 23rd Street. Over there where NT Motor Company . . .

RD: In the barrio, in . . .

NA: . . . where NT Motor Company is. His name is Manuel González; he sells cars there. I have a relative there; he served on the school board. Andy Anzaldúa, in McAllen. Then we have a first cousin, he's at Alamo American Finance, Baldemar Roquín. And another first cousin, Saldaña's Loan Company, there in McAllen. So maybe you can say hello to them for me if you see them. Your name, sir?

CR: Claudio Ramírez.

NA: From where, Mr. Ramírez?

CR: From Pharr.

NA: From Pharr, Texas. Very well. Would you like to use the microphone, anything Orendain or I might have overlooked? I believe Orendain has covered just about everything. And from here where do you go, Orendain?

AO: Well, tomorrow we're going back to the Valley again, and just to remind everyone that our offices— If someday you go to the Valley, our offices are on Highway 83, a mile east of San Juan, Texas, where Morningside Road crosses Highway 83. That's where our office is, and *El Campesino* comes out from there. Again, too, I want to remind everyone that at 3:00 this afternoon we'll still be here talking with whoever would like to listen and exchange viewpoints— and let's believe in what to agree on and see if something can be done. Too, the grape and lettuce boycott, which is very, very important, maybe not to the farm workers in Texas, but for those workers who are going to California and know what a union contract is; they already know what we can do to succeed.

NA: Orendain, how does the little town of Muleshoe look to you, without holding anything back?

AO: Well, it's very pretty— a typical town. While this is the first time I've been to West Texas, we were just now recalling that it looks like the valley around Bakersfield, Lamont, where I remember too: The only thing you lack here is grapes growing, and there are no "bottled goods" here, either— we don't know why! *[everyone laughs]*

NA: Very well. So Mr. Orendain will be at the offices of Chicanos Unidos-Campesinos this afternoon, from 3:00 on. Armando, has the luncheon ended or is it still going on?

AA: It's over.

NA: It's over. Very well. It's been a pleasure to have— It seems to me, Armando, that you mentioned yesterday that Mr. Orendain had been national treasurer of the . . .

AA: Yes, national treasurer of César Chávez's organization. Member of the board of directors, also, of the national union of César Chávez.

NA: That's a very high position, and we're pleased to have had a person like that with us. We've had others, like this young man [Ramsey] Muñiz who was here with us last year. And then this other young man was here— what was his name? I've forgotten the name, but Angel González had talked with us— to start in on the González— he's in Crystal City, the school superintendent; he's from our town, in Mercedes. Good man. What else, Bill? Is there anything we've missed?

BG: Hey, wasn't it Angel González who wrote that song "Sin Fortuna"? It seems to me he's the one, if he's involved with the Raza Unida, Chicanos Unidos thing. I think so, because the tune says something about that. That he was born without wealth but finds himself in a very high economic status now, only now he doesn't like the way the rich people treat him; it's pure hypocrisy, as he says in the words of the song, and he likes the poor better.

NA: Who wrote the words, Bill?

BG: My cousin, Angel González!

NA: Angel González, and sung by Gerardo?

BG: Gerardo Reyes. Exactly. On Columbia Records, yes, exactly.

NA: Very nice. Very, very nice. Put it on the turntable now, and we'll dedicate it especially to Mr. Antonio Orendain and his friends gathered around us this afternoon.

Orendain, we hope you're leaving with a good opinion of us, because we're always ready— always— to welcome you. As I noted earlier, our boss here says to me, "Noé, the program is yours." If I've made mistakes, afterwards he tells me, "Look, Noé, there was this or that, here or there," but it's never come to that end. We've had people say, "Man, but Noé doesn't want to give me this, or doesn't want to do this for me." Many times it's impossible, because they ask— they *demand*— they demand, they want to squeeze our neck. It can't be done, and we tell them, "You know what? We can't, because you're coming to us *demanding* it; you want to tell us how to run the program, and you can't do that."

We know how we should run it, and we think we're doing a good job. But at the same time, too, we accept opinions from the public. Because there've been people who call us saying, "That music, Noé— Chole's sold the cow now— change it!" Yes, maybe you don't like it, but that other guy does. How are we going to do it? We're ready if someone believes that our program isn't being conducted as it should, let them call us and tell us, as they have, and we appreciate that. I can't please the entire public; Bill can't do it either; my son or María either. We try to do what's possible.

Armando, do you have some other . . .

AO: I just want to tell all your listeners, then, to be careful with this program. Because if they don't take care of it, they're not going to know what they're losing until it's too late. Right now, for example, for me to be able to go and say everything that I've said here, if I were to do it on all the stations in the United States, there are many of them. I don't believe there are any like it.

NA: What do you think, Bill?

AO: So for that reason, if the people here don't know how to evaluate what they have, someday they'll know— if they end up losing it, then they'll know what they lost.

BG: Mr. Orendain, you don't know how good it is to hear those words. Many of the people who listen to us every day— we mentioned that not all radio stations give enough time for this kind of discussion, and many people criticize us and tell us that we're just making ourselves look good. I want you to know it does me good to hear your words, since I'm one of the main commentators that do this kind of commentary here. Noé, too, comments the same as I do, and it pleases us a lot because anyone who listens to us and had any doubt about what we say realizes exactly that it's the whole truth, that not all radio stations provide the public service that Radio KMUL provides to the listening public.

AO: Believe me, I have experience speaking on stations in California, when I was involved in the boycott there in Chicago, Illinois, in Oregon, and in various counties throughout the state of Texas. And I'm not talking about five years, but rather that I've known César Chávez and worked with César Chávez since 1950 to this day. So I know what I'm telling you, and I know just how the times in radio have progressed in our favor. But at the same time, I'm now coming to know that in Muleshoe it looks like you're a little ahead of them— not a lot, but perhaps a little.

NA: Very well, Mr. Orendain. As Bill said, it does us a lot of good, a *lot* of good, the words you've just said to our listeners, that they should take care of us. You're the first person to give us that protection, that they take care of us, that they not act like barbarians! Yes, because if they look after us, well, we'll move forward. Very well. Orendain, we could talk all afternoon, but it looks like we have the minister who's going to preach at 2:00. One more thing: we are the only station, the only station that's giving *free time* to seven ministers. Cost-free. Cost-free. No one else does it except us. And then they go and steal a rug from the boss— how crude! *[they all laugh]*

Well, friends, the gentlemen are leaving. It's 2:00 p.m. The program begins and— Orendain, thanks so much, and we're at your service. And let the other stations know that here we're not like San Camilo; we're the best, eh? Put on the song, please, for Orendain to hear.

BG: Well, Mr. Orendain is leaving. We're very sorry to say goodbye, but the program has to continue its course. Mr. Orendain, I just recommend that you go on being sincere with the people as you spread your message. It's a recommendation that I'm going to make to you personally, because I don't want you and this organization— which has done so much good in the community, not just in Muleshoe and this whole region, but also in California, in the Valley, everywhere— my recommendation, that you don't go and do like some other organizations that have embarked on the supposed mission of helping the public, and the only ones that end up benefiting are the representatives themselves, as has occurred before. Very well, and if the shoe fits, wear it, huh? This is Bill González, at your service, and here's your song, Mr. Orendain. *[plays the record, "Sin Fortuna"]*

There you heard it, my favorite melody, with Gerardo Reyes, "Sin Fortuna." A Columbia Records recording, words by Angel González. The guy had to be a González!